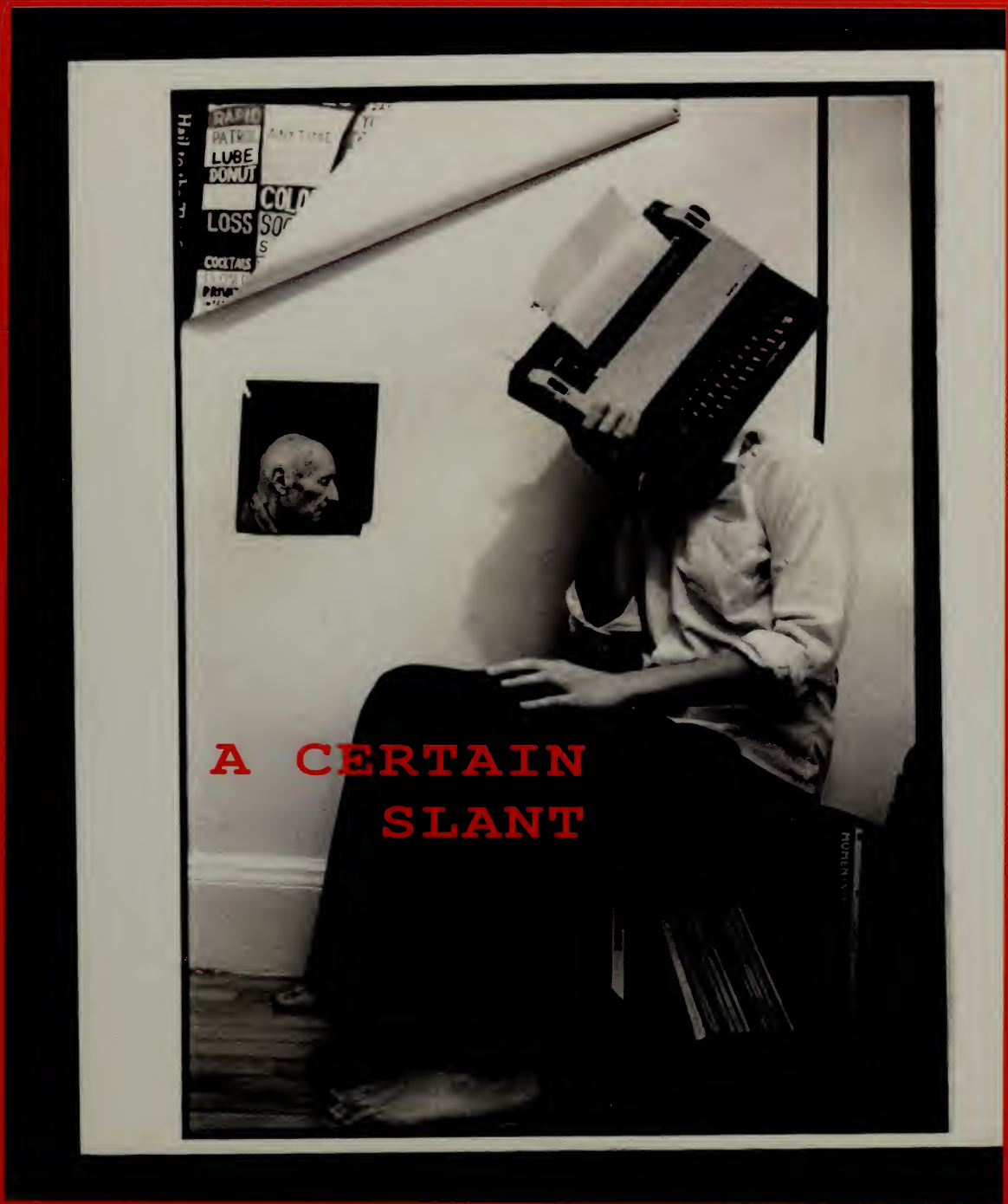

A CERTAIN SLANT

arts & literary journal.

spring 2010

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Editorial Staff

Sarah Linstrom
Clayton Morse
Christopher Kyprianos
Joseph Benevidez
Christine Nickoloff
Cassandra Cohen

Front Cover Photograph

Sarah Linstrom

Back Cover Photograph

Clayton Morse

Cover Design

Sarah Linstrom
Clayton Morse
Chris Kyprianos

Faculty Advisor

Michelle Valois

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There's a certain slant of light,
On winter afternoons,
That oppresses, like the weight
Of cathedral tunes.

Emily Dickinson

Diane Gilliam Fisher

The Night Zella Died

Now this was not some aunt that was old when we were little. Zella was one of us. Me and her and Betty graduated from high school together, then married brothers. I remember holding hands with Zella in fourth grade. I can see clear as day how she always looked, running on ahead and swinging her hips and laughing over her shoulder. So that night, I told Betty and Gladys and Vivian, *You girls go on out to dinner, I'm gonna stay here by the phone.* I mean, us women of the family, we drove all the way down to Florida to be with Zella and her girls and I didn't want them girls to call and us not be there. So I said, *I'll get a piece of cheese out of the fridge, that's what I like anyway,* and Fanny, that's the friend of Betty's mother, Jewel, that let us stay with her while we were down there, she said, *I'll stay, too, and I'll make Hopie a cheese sandwich and it'll be the best cheese sandwich she's ever had in her whole life.* And she did, and it was, and they called.

And Fanny said, *Now I'm not gonna say a word when they get back, Hopie, I'll leave that up to you.* Soon as they got through the door, she said, *Jewel, you come over here and sit down. Vivian and Gladys, you go over on the couch, and Betty, you come over here and sit by your mother.* Then Fanny looked at me. *Ok, Hopie,* she said, *now you tell them.*

Clayton Morse

Sorrow's Tale

My creator was the most respected and renowned of any within his craft. He was said to have found the recipe to create a tool that allowed man to hear the sounds of heaven. But to me he was a cruel and neglectful father. He cast me aside and cursed his hands for ever bringing me into existence.

I am the runt of the Stradivari litter.

I wandered for years; lost to the world; never revealed for my maker feared rebuke and shame.

"Why was this my fate," I often wondered. I watched my brothers' and sisters' fame spread over decades as my depression deepened. The cracks of age effected me more than my siblings for I was forgotten, never handled. Why was I not thrown into the fire to end my misery and torment?

This agony persisted for two centuries until a young man picked me out of the dust in a storage attic. He scrutinized me for many minutes before slowly picking up a bow. He gently rested me upon his shoulder. His cheek grazed my skin. I felt a tenderness in this man I had never known. Couldn't he see what I was? I was worthless, a castaway.

After breathing deeply for several seconds he slowly drew the horsehair bow across my strings. As the single note was played all the sadness and frustration of 200 years poured forth and my silent tears appeared on the man's face.

We cried together for a long time as he played through a piece I had heard many times from my sibling; but never like this. Why had my creator never discovered my gift? Then I understood. My gift was not created. It grew out of years of misery until not a single instrument in the world could echo the haunting beauty that emanated from my strings.

And today, as I am played for a small weeping crowd on a small German bridge, I know my place in the world.

My name is "Sorrow," the lost Stradivarius.

Sarah Linstrom

To Mozart on His Birthday

Were you a conductor
Upon your arrival at the pearly gates?
Did God say: Do something with these angels!
So sickenly sweet
Harps plinking and plucking!
How would you arrange such a thing?

Soft bassoons of dripping dew
A flight of flutes to bring the light
Strings
Flittering the eyes awake
Into a symphony of sunrise?

And Thunder!
Was that your idea too?
A roll of timpani
Emboldened bass booms
A Symbols crash of
Light, Flash,
And Power!
FORTISSIMO!

I'm sure it's what God has always dreamed of...

And what of Beethoven?
Is he over seeing sunset?
A crescendo of fire on the horizon
Light keys descending in cool blues...
A smoldering sonata to set the mood
Before a twinkling of stars...
And Moonlight
Lull the world to sleep?

Christine Nickoloff

Glass

She's made of glass
double paned and reinforced
able to withstand, alas
still breakable of course.

Frosted by her own winter
Unexpected exhale on her window pane
sun penetrates her center
cool warmth she feels again.

Winter gives way to spring anew
Time for bitter clean.
Rainbows escape and by fortunate few
can be ever sharply seen.

She used to come in colors everywhere,
today she's made herself perfectly clear.
Now glass, sound proof, losing air
she screams and no one can hear.

Throw the diamond rock
and let the many shards
speak with jagged tongues and bleeding talk.
Shatter the crystalline facade.

Comes the dawn with tears of dew
streaking down her fragile surface.
Each drop washes away the stain of who
dare lure her from her unknown purpose.

Robert Gosselin

Ghosts

Where do ghosts go?
Where do ghosts go
when the houses they
haunt have to finally
be torn down around them?
Must they stay behind,
left with nothing
but unchangeable memory,
and stumble blindly
through sterilized
and confusing surroundings?
Or can they
split themselves
into thousands
of tiny pieces,
attaching a small part
of their existence
to each chunk of
carted off rubble.
And with nothing left to say
they slowly melt away,
becoming part of the
patiently waiting earth.

Jennifer Trapasso

Pumpkin Tea

He smiled, she laughed, they cried; it was over
It was more than just an easy ride
Like the fleeting fragrance of pumpkin tea in mid-
October.

Slave laboring days of work and load, not enough to
have food left over
If only there were more time to bide
He smiled, she laughed, they cried; it was over

I met her when we first came in, she was our mover
I lied
Like the fleeting fragrance of pumpkin tea in mid-
October.

I couldn't stay away from her moreover
I thought if I told you it wouldn't slide
He smiled, she laughed, they cried; it was over.

I should have never hurt her
The truth no longer had a place to hide
Like the fleeting fragrance of pumpkin tea in mid-
October.

I tore apart our white four-leaf clover
It felt like something crawled up and died
He smiled, she laughed, they cried; it was over
almost like the fleeting fragrance of pumpkin tea in
mid-October.

Tori D'Angelo

Make Me Dance

Why not play that violin?
Play me something to dance to.
I promise you it's not a sin.

I want to feel the notes within
My feet wish never to stop.
Why not play that violin?

I'll place money inside your tin,
If that's what it takes for you to play.
I promise you it's not a sin.

Immerse my body in your lyrical gin
Make my body sway unrestrictedly
I promise you it's not a sin.

I want to let the sounds win.
Take me to another place.
Why not play that violin?
I promise you it's not a sin.

Sarah Jablonski

Mommy Dressed Me in a Black Dress

Mommy dressed me in a black dress, black tights and black shoes. She knows I hate dresses. I always try and sneaky change before we drive to church on Sundays. But she never lets me be.

Mommy isn't as happy today. She's not angry either. She brushes the knots out of my head, it hurts worse than usual. Then she does the same to my little brother and sister. Mommy says that my bigger sisters and brother are big enough to dress themselves. This makes me jealous.

Mommy buckles my seat belt and then we drive. Mommy said no music, so the ride is super boring. We park in a parking lot next to a big house looking place. It looks spooky. We go inside and it's even spookier inside. The lights aren't that bright and there's someone playing the piano. They aren't singing though. I love singing. Mommy makes us stand in a line all polite and quiet like. I don't like being here, I want to go home, and it's too scary and quiet. I am glad Josh and Emma are next to me. After a million hours mommy finally says it's almost time to go. Everyone went up but me. I stay where mommy put me and think about listening to my Raffie tape at home in my Mickey Mouse tape player. I miss Raffie. Mommy comes over to me and whispers in my ear,

"It's the last chance you're going to have to see him you know."

I look at mommy; her eyes are all red and puffy. My mind is still on Raffie. I nod and walk forward; my legs feel all funny, like I'm a robot and their moving all by themselves. I walk to the front of the spooky room and look in a big box.

"Bye daddy." I whisper.

Fifteen years later.

An event that really changed your life… I thought hard. I couldn't think of anything that really changed me in any real big way. Maybe that time I won the bicycle at the library's fair when I

was twelve. Or when I almost died falling off that horse in Texas at my grandpa's ranch. Or I suppose when my father died, that impacted my entire family a whole lot. I hate seeing that stupid therapist. She makes me talk about the most pointless things. My mother asked me to go, I can't say no to my mother.

"Well, I suppose when my father died that really made my life take an interesting turn."

"What kind of a turn?" She probed.

I sighed, "I don't know."

"Good or bad would you say?" She never gives up.

"Bad, what kind of child has a good turn in life when a parent dies?"

"Ah, what kind of things did you notice?"

I stopped for a moment; it had been a while since I thought about the funeral. It was so long ago.

I was seven at the time. I remember how detached I was the entire funeral. How unemotional I was, even as a seven year old looking at her dead father, all I could think about was Raffie. I wished I could have told her that, but my lips stayed closed, and I smiled instead.

"It was a hard funeral, but I was seven so I don't remember that much from it." I lied.

"That's understandable. It must've been hard for you."

"Must've." I agreed looking away but nodding.

I finally escaped her chair and made my way to my car. I was twenty two years old and still was alone as ever. I was almost out of school, I had taken a little longer than most to finish because of a few setbacks but I am back on track.

I didn't tell the therapist about the anger that had appeared inside of me the day I found out my father had died. It hadn't gone away even now, only grown. I didn't tell her that even though he was an absent and abusive father I had liked him best. Instead I did what I do best; I smile and sit in my little seat of denial and loneliness.

But seeing this therapist might help

eventually. I'm still getting to know her, still trying to figure out how much I want to share, who knows maybe she'll fix me. That is one thing I really wouldn't mind.

Jakob Hamn
The Coffin

The flag draped coffin was taken out of the belly of the plane. It was dark outside, and the runway was flooded with light, as the men in uniform solemnly stepped forward and lifted the coffin. Then walking with military precision they marched the coffin across the tarmac to the flight hanger. Inside, it was placed carefully next to other coffins which soberly lined the entire hanger. The stars and stripes stretched as far as the eye could see, it was a place filled with the honored dead.

As Dutch gazed down at the coffin before him, he could only think about the man who now lay in it. James, his name was Jamie. When they had first met, it had been in Basic. Jamie was this scrawny thing from out west. Dutch couldn't recall from where, probably Arizona or Utah. He was the shortest thing, and living proof that the Army was taking whatever they could get. At only 5'1 and 120 lbs, Jamie was a light weight physically speaking. But he had this spirit of determination, and an inner strength that he said came from his Mamma. Dutch was the opposite. He'd grown up working hard on his Dad's farm in Kentucky, and was a farm boy through and through. The Army was the only way out of his hometown. It was that or accept a hard life of manual labor. With grades like his, there was no chance for college unless he got a Football scholarship, but that dream didn't pan out. Then he met Jamie. This little scrawny kid quickly became attached to Dutch when he started helping him make it through the rigorous Army training. Once they graduated, Dutch thought that would be the end of Jamie, but it wasn't. Somehow, Jamie managed to be transferred to Dutch's battalion and company. They would be stationed and deployed together.

A few months later Dutch got word that his battalion was scheduled to be deployed to Iraq, so Dutch decided to move things forward with his

girlfriend Jean. They were married a month before deployment, and Jamie was his best man. Once they got to Baghdad their company was given the job of patrols. They patrolled the streets to keep order and try and prevent bombing. Some of the people were friendly; some of them weren't. Dutch ended up sharing quarters with Jamie and the kid grew more and more attached. It was like having another wife. At one point, Dutch told him that he had to stop this; one bitch at home was enough. The kid didn't take it well, he started crying and blubbering, while Dutch wondered for the thousandth time how on Earth the kid made it into the Army. Then not knowing what came over him, he went over and grabbed Jamie. Shaking him he demanded that he stop this crying nonsense, but at that moment Jamie looked up at him with those deep blue eyes, and to this day Dutch didn't know what came over him, he leaned over and kissed the kid on the mouth. Deep and hard. And Jamie responded. They easily melted into each other's arms and that night for the first time in his life Dutch made love to Jamie. After that, the two were inseparable, and not just because of Jamie's wishes. At first Dutch tried to reason that this wasn't an affair on Jean, he was just getting out some horniness on his buddy. This wasn't love, it was just a release. But deep down, Dutch knew that wasn't true. He knew that all the emotions he'd suppressed throughout High School where coming back, and Jamie, oh sweet Jamie was pulling him in. He was falling in love and knew it.

As time progressed, Dutch and Jamie had to be careful in hiding their feelings for one another. If anyone guessed, the results would be brutal and swift. They'd be lucky to get dishonorably discharged without getting beat within an inch of their lives. At night when they were alone, Dutch and Jamie would lie in bed together after making love, and would dream about how life would be when they got home. Dutch planned on leaving Jean, and moving with Jamie to New Hampshire. They'd buy a little New England farm, get a Civil Union and live happily together. Dutch would teach Jamie how to raise chickens and

pigs, and it would all be perfect.

Nothing in life seems to go as planned. Dutch and Jamie where out on patrol when a roadside bomb went off. Dutch was blown clear into the air and landed in bad shape. He ended up so badly damaged that he was shipped off to Germany for medical treatment. Thankfully Jamie was spared nothing more than scrapes and bruises. But he was still in Baghdad. Then one morning as Dutch was eating his breakfast, the news arrived. It was a letter from his commander informing him that his good friend James F. Henshaw had died honorably in combat serving his country. Dutch nearly broke apart. He wept and sobbed so hard that the nurses gave him medication to make him sleep. It was a nightmare, Dutch had finally found someone who loved him unconditionally, and had lost him. The kid was gone. Dutch was later discharged from the hospital and given leave to escort Jamie's body home. He rode in full dress uniform on the flight, and walked behind the men as they marched Jamie's body into the flight hanger. Now standing above the coffin, Dutch felt tears well up in his eyes. Blinking hard, he suppressed them and mentally prepared himself for what was to come next.

A few hours later, he escorted the body out to the hearse that was waiting and rode with it several hours to Jamie's hometown. It was a little place in Utah, full on Mormon country. As the hearse pulled into the parking lot of the church, Dutch got out and met the honor guard. They discussed how the funeral would be commenced, and the music the family had requested. The VA Rep was present and introduced Dutch to Jamie's mother. "Thank you for taking care of my son. He wrote many letters home talking about you and how you where his best friend. I'm so grateful that you brought my baby home to me."

Dutch trying not to choke up and to appear every inch of the military man he was, said in reply "M'am, it was an honor to serve with your son. He meant so much to me. I cannot put it to words." She wiped the tears from her eyes with a black handkerchief and then said words Dutch would never forget. "I know you

weren't there, but please, can you tell me how he died?"

Dutch nearly collapsed. "M'am, I can't... I can't tell you how he died, what I can tell you is how he lived. The kind of man he was, the man I knew." She looked up at Dutch with the same deep blue eyes and said "then please, stay after the funeral and come to my house." Several hours later, Dutch somberly handed the folded flag to Jamie's mother. She took it in trembling hands and nodded at him. Then, the coffin was slowly lowered into the ground. Taps played in the air, its notes hanging with sorrow. They could not only be heard but felt.

When it was all over, Dutch met Jamie's mother at her home. She showed him the room Jamie grew up in, and the piano he played. Later as Dutch was on his way out she handed him Jamie's journals saying "I don't need them, but you should know who he was before you met him." As Dutch was walking out the door, Jamie's mom surprised him. "I am a mother. Don't think I don't know what he was. My son was not a normal boy, he had no interest in girls and he never had a girlfriend. You loved him, didn't you? I could tell from his letters that he loved you. I know that in your world this love is forbidden. Hell, it is in mine too. Some would blame it on his father's death, but I know he was born that way. Thank You."

Dutch turned and said, "Thank you for what?" She responded, "For loving him." It was then that Dutch broke down. He fell to his knees and wept. Jamie's mother walked up to him and fell on her knees next to his sobbing body. She cupped his face in her hands and brought it up to hers. "Don't cry, his death was not your fault. You gave him some of the best days of his life. I absolve and release you from your guilt. Go forward and love, love because he loved you." She then took Dutch into her arms and wept with him on the floor. As Dutch rode with the honor guard back to the base, he felt lighter. Released in a way. As he looked outside the window, he knew that his life was forever altered by a scrawny boy who should never have become a soldier.

Gregory Vigneaux

You're to Die For

You're voice is as soothing as an air raid siren
You're touch is as gentle as a raging mob
You're eyes hold the color of a burning city
You're face is as gorgeous as an open grave
You smell like tear gas and you
taste as sweet as cyanide

Your smile makes buildings collapse and ships sink
You're laugh puts countries at war
You're as angelic as the devil himself
You're as pretty as the day we all die
You're as cute as a riot in Detroit
and you're as attractive as a car accident

You're as blissful as a suicide letter
You're as elegant as a finger on a trigger
You're as heavenly as a barrel between teeth
And you're adorable as a fist full of shotgun shells

You're as beautiful as a crime in cold blood
And you're as perfect as a death sentence
You're as delightful as an execution
You're as splendid as a firing squad

You're as delicate as a land mine
And you're as graceful as a grenade

You're as lovely as a body lying in the street
And I just needed you to know

Robert Gosselin
Broken Mirror

Choosing to open my windows
a great wind blows
through me.
Energies rip through my soul
like tornadoes tearing through
shadowy abandoned barns
stabbed through
with shafts of yellow light.
I fall and shatter into
a million cutting sparks.
The world shakes with the sound
of the splintering shards.
Running away I pass gray marble crying angels
lining every dark road I choose.
Lost souls beg for my attention
and reach into my pockets for spare change.
I try opening my eyes wider
so I can only see what is real,
but when I do the shadows of hidden others
flit through the outer reaches of my vision.
The world becomes only holes
surrounded by the sharp edges
of other dimensions,
that glitter like rippling water
at the bottom of a long
echoing well.

Christine Nickoloff

Gray

Colors so vivid once were they.
Wore a lucid mask of a rainbow face.
Now here I lay, fade to gray.

Smothered and choked by a blanket of decay
covered, forgotten, of me no trace.
Colors so vivid once were they.

Crystals in the sunlight dance did they
until the vacuum of dusk gave chase.
Now here I lay, fade to gray.

Acid drops of dusty rain
feed the dead flower in its vase.
Colors so vivid once were they.

Iron tears make their way
dripping void down my sullen face.
Now here I lay, fade to gray.

I die in the fatal shadow of disgrace.
Grave with shame for becoming its prey.
Colors so vivid once were they,
now here I lay, fade to gray.

Joseph Benevidez
Happy Memories

Butcher's knife in hand

As I approach

Your guts fly towards the land

Do not think me a hack

For before the night's end

I'll have you grinning from ear to ear

Jack

Jennifer Trapasso
From the Sink I think

The rain dribbled down the window pane;
  water pooled onto the windowsill.
"I should go get mom….I think
  this reminds me of the kitchen sink
      accident."

The dirt and pollen float at the top;
    water forever rising up.
"We should clean these windows…I think
  the cat will want to drink from our brand new sink!
She'll love it…
      I think.

Andrew Getchell
Lyrical Admittance

Ok, searching for words in deserving your observing - I'm serving metaphors hot off the ink thoughts start to sink - Seeking to win a race with competitors that move as fast as cars, Nascar speed with disadvantages for everybody. Called life strife in nights as you grieve and cry because you don't have the capabilities to reach your dream, look up at the sky in the middle of night you scream, hoping your moping will turn to coping - desire the goal to open within your grasp, but reality takes you back - in your face like you can't have that, angry at the world and the people that try to help you - because you desire to accomplish everything they do, so you try harder push farther without support from mother father, because you feel disabled - and everyone blames you - that you're not the same to, they have to work in a category of normality - while you receive special attention and their frustrated venting of undeserved compensation through checks that dissipate - the disability insurance they paid is basically fake, Not sure she can hold anymore hate - listening to a fiancé that says - you may not be a mother cause fate - where responsibility isn't what you take - puts too much weight - on a single individual shoulders that it could break, for fear of both you and the child's state, here I contemplate - who's to blame in this case.

Regina Connerty

Scratching the Surface

Jean Schlickman was the first person I ever heard say, "Eat me!" We were in the fourth grade, on the bus, heading home. I remember thinking that I had no idea what the hell that meant, but I liked the way it sounded. All the kids that sat in the back with us let out a collective "Ooooooooooooooo" and Junky Jimmy knew that he had been dissed, hardcore. I don't know where Jean would have heard it, thinking back now it must have been because Eddie Murphy's movie "RAW" had just come out. Yep, that has to be where she heard it! Nevertheless, Junky Jimmy (he was our class bully who never had clean clothes on and never had his homework) had taken Jean's sketchbook and was rushing through the pages making obnoxious critiques. It wasn't until he turned to a picture of an angel flying over some trees that Jean couldn't take it anymore. Jimmy's eyes lit up when he saw it too; he knew she had spent a long time on this picture, and that it would be the easiest way to get her goat. He wiped his greasy unkempt hair to one side, gave out a sideways sneer, and said, "What is this? Looks like a kindergartner drew this. I take pisses in the snow that look better than this!" Jean was mortified. Her face grew red with a mixture of anger and embarrassment. It was the former that got the best of her. She stood up, snatched the sketchpad with the quickness of a Kung Fu master, and uttered those two words: "Eat me!"

When I got home from school that day, the dogs were outside in the yard. My German Sheppard Mix "Mia" was jumping at the fence, eager for me to get there and show her my unconditional love, while "Lucky" my mother's unexplainably dumb, and unbelievably faithful Irish Setter had himself positioned in the pointer pose at all the falling snow flakes. My mind was racing. From the moment I escaped the "zoo on wheels" I had gone over the whole situation, and was in awe at how powerful those two

individually harmless words had become when put together with inflection and emphasis. I was dying to try it out for myself. To see if I could invoke the same amount of humiliation as Jean had done. I worked my way through the dogs, with the phrase ringing in my head. Inside, my mother was nowhere to be found. This wasn't unusual; she wasn't there for most of my life anyway. I threw my trapper keeper on the couch, my bag on the floor and headed out the door to gather up some friends.

We lived five minutes from a college and were basically an on-campus house. The house itself was a white, two-story, old house. It was set back from the road and was numbered 52½, which I always thought was odd! I mean who lives in half of a house? My neighborhood was full of kids and college students. There was always some fun going on. I ran across the street to get Brian and Blake Johnson - my two best neighborhood friends. (We didn't really talk at school because I was older and couldn't be seen talking to younger boys.) They never had to do their homework right away, and so we were outside playing within seconds. Next to the Johnsons lived the Rowling family.

Shauna Rowling was an only child and was just awesome! I think she may have been my first girl crush, She was a fifth grader, but was known to hang with us. Her dad had this old Fiero in his yard that didn't work and sometimes he would let us play in it. We would pretend to be driving for hours and hours and hours. Blake yelled for Shauna, and she came out instantly. I think she secretly liked Blake, but she would never have admitted it then. It was unanimously decided that we would all travel up to the campus, have a snowball fight in the quad and then explore the underground tunnels that connected the buildings. We weren't supposed to be there of course, and I don't know who first told us about the tunnels, but it was a great place to play and be free, especially in winter! The tunnels started at Thompson Hall and continued all the way through the campus to the McKay building, which was also our

school. They were narrow, poorly lit tunnels with pipes running along the light brown walls and ceilings and no one was ever down there! We ruled those tunnels, never fearing anything, not even the campus rent-a-cops until that day.

My mom was full of stories from her childhood and always felt the need to share them without censorship. Most of them were funny. Like when she was dared by my aunt Nora to lick a frozen doorbell, and did, and ended up with her lips stuck to it, like she was nursing from a breast. I loved picturing her, stuck there helpless, latched on to this frozen metal teat, while her sister laughed hysterically until she just about peed herself. But there were those "other" stories, the ones that scared the shit out of me. The ones about growing up on the grounds of a mental institution where my grandfather was head of maintenance, and even worse were the ones about her summer vacations at her Aunt Margaret's house. Aunt Margaret was a widow, who had two out of control sons: Herbie and Kenny. Kenny was the older of the two, the ring leader, the "smart" one. Herbie wasn't all there, he was mentally slow, but very tall, and he was certainly the more evil of the two.

Like clockwork each summer (starting at about age nine) my grandparents shipped off my mother, who was the youngest of seven, to Central Massachusetts to dear old Aunt Margaret's house. There she was teased, beaten, locked in closets, and ultimately raped repeatedly by her older cousins. For years this went on without my mother being able to tell anyone. At around age twelve my mother finally told my grandma. Not only did she not believe her, she told her it was a sin to even speak of such things. Good old Irish Catholic guilt got the best of my mother and she never mentioned it again to another grown up. Finally, around age fourteen, my mother got her period, and was never sent to Aunt Margaret's house again. I'm pretty sure my Grandma knew that if it were true, that she was in fact being raped, then my mom could come home pregnant - and well, that would be the biggest sin of em'all!

It was these chilling accounts that riddled me with the greatest amount of fear. I listened to my mother tell me how hard she prayed to God, and to all of her ancestors who were watching over her, how she pleaded for her guardian angel to take a more active role in her protection and how she finally just "left her body" while it all went on. I pictured her locked in the closet afterwards, shaking, crying, and blaming herself - while the sociopathic brothers played baseball with frogs in the back yard. There was never a second while I was listening that I didn't believe it could happen. I knew she was afraid, and broken, and how much it influenced her life. I knew it was real!! I knew boys and men did these unspeakable things to little girls. I knew this for 100% certainty!

When we first moved to the burbs my mother walked me to school every day until I was comfortable enough to do it alone. We took the same route religiously. Walking on the left side of the street, all the way down Highland, crossing over at the campus pizzeria, and continuing down passing Hastings Hall, the Army recruitment office, the Music/Theatre Building, and lastly the maintenance building, where we would turn left, cut through a parking lot and bingo-- I'd be at school. About a week after we had established our routine, while we walked and talked, (and I imagined snakes following me from under the shrubs) - something went wrong. My mother gripped my hand so tightly, that my fingertips went ice cold. I looked at her face, and she was furrow browed, and on the verge of tears. She hurriedly switched sides of the street, and now the campus chapel was to our right. Her pace quickened to triple time, and I had no idea what was going on. I assumed that there actually had been snakes following us, and I wasn't crazy, and she knew it too. As we passed the maintenance building (now on the opposite side of the street) I saw a skinny, dirty, tall mechanic with ghost white hair standing next to an old army jeep staring at my mother. A wave of goose bumps ran up my arm and the hairs on the back of my neck went up. I

suddenly felt super-protective of my mother, like when I was small and her boyfriends would beat her, I straightened up and became a super hero. I mustered all the bravery I had and sent it like shockwaves from my body to hers, gripping her hand just as tight as she gripped mine. He kept looking and we kept walking. As we passed the maintenance building and headed left towards the parking lots, my mother's hand loosened up and all she said was "Don't look back!!"

That day in school I could not focus. I just kept thinking of that gangly, white haired guy who had been eyeing my mom. I had never seen him before, and I was almost certain that she hadn't either. Who the hell was HE to be looking at her like that? As the day progressed, the madder I became. I started playing out the scenario over and over until I came up with a great plan. I needed to make sure that we passed this guy on the way home, and that he would be outside looking all gross, and I would yell over to him, "What the hell are you looking at? Got a problem?" and he would apologize and sulk back into the grimy garage he had crawled out of. Then my mother would be so proud of me, hell maybe she'd even give me dessert for dinner!

So that was my plan and I was going to execute it flawlessly. I waited so anxiously for the day to be over, the bell to ring, and to see my mother standing there. But she wasn't. My heart stopped!! She was not standing next to Mrs. Mederois the crossing guard as usual. I scanned the sidewalks, and even the play yard, and she was nowhere. My heart sank into my stomach, and this painful lump developed in my throat causing me to be unable to make a sound. I immediately began playing out scenarios that would have caused my mom not to be here on time. Maybe she was chatting it up on the phone, or she was baking and lost track of time… or more likely, that creepy, white haired son-of-a-bitch had waited for her to drop me off at school and then… then… done something to her. I clenched my fists, and held back my tears, swallowed the lump away, and started marching towards

the road. I was going to find him, and so help me GOD if he had hurt my mother….I was going to kill him with one of his own tools!!

As I crossed the street riddled with panic and anger, I heard the family call. It was a high pitched two metered "Ooo" sound. Thank God!! From the corner of my eye I saw my mother standing in the opened door of a taxi. There she was! In one piece, unscathed, even smiling. "Forgive me God for thinking what I was thinking," I said under my breath. She had never picked me up in a taxi, I had never even thought of that one! We probably had to rush out to do groceries, or maybe a forgotten doctor's visit or something. I got in the taxi, and she smiled and asked me how my day was. I told her about the color wheels we were making in art, and how lunch was gross, and how Warren had laughed so hard that he spit milk all over the lunch table. She listened intently with a big smile and a scarily calm undertone of urgency.

"Where are we going, ma" I asked. 'Home" was all she said. When we pulled into the driveway I was just about bursting with curiosity. What the hell was going on!! Why didn't we walk home, and who was that guy this morning? As I walked into the kitchen I saw family photo albums of my mother's strewn all over the table, pictures were everywhere, the sink was full of dishes, the laundry lay in a basket still on top the washer and a half empty bottle of wine was sitting on the counter.

She knew it was coming. She sat down at the table, and began putting pictures back into their cellophane homes. "Mom?… Ma?… Who was that guy this morning? Why didn't we walk home today?" My mother looked out into space with the saddest eyes, took a sip out of her wine glass, and replied. "That man was my cousin Herbie. He knows I live here now, and he knows that you're my daughter! You are to stay away from him. If he comes near you, or tries to talk to you, run. I mean it!! From now on you will walk a different way to school and back. Do you understand what I am saying to you?"

I thought I was going to vomit. I didn't move, I didn't blink, I didn't breathe, and I certainly didn't answer.

"He will try to hurt you if he can! Do you understand?!!…you are to stay away from him!"

I more than understood!! He would beat me, and lock me in a closet and rape the shit outta me if he could.

Suddenly, I did not feel bad for plotting to kill him, and I said a silent prayer to GOD, that I would just never ever see him again!!

The tunnel that ran from Thompson Hall to the science building was the longest and most exciting. There were several different branches that broke off of the main tunnel that lead to boiler rooms, supply rooms, and a couple led to nothing but dead ends. Of course we played hide and seek down there, I mean how could we resist? We broke off into teams. Boys versus girls. The boys buried their faces against the clock outside of Thompson Hall and me and Shauna took off with wild fury. We ran down the first flight of stairs and through the axis door to the main tunnel. The lights flickered just barely enough to see our shadows jumping on the walls along side us, It was a frantic type of fun. Our hearts raced as we neared the first branch. "Should we break up so it takes them longer to find us?" I asked. Shauna did not break her stride, she simply turned her head, grabbed my hand and we headed down a branch on the left towards one of the boiler rooms. "They will think we broke up, and they will head in different directions, all WE have to do is stay one step ahead of them!" I was taken aback by her spherical thinking of the matter. As the air grew thick with hot moisture, I could feel my lungs getting heavy. The boiler room was very near.

The door was wasabi green with a stenciled number 5 on it and a large yellow sticker that read: **CAUTION** Pipes Under Pressure. We never gave it a second thought. Just pushed the heavy, unlocked door open and squeezed together behind the largest pipe we could find. This was the best hiding spot, for this

boiler room, unlike boiler room number nine, had no working lights. Just an occasional red strobe light that flashed just long enough to make things look creepy. The first time I ever opened door #5, I was scared as all hell to go inside. All I could think about was Freddy Kruger, and how he would surely love to hangout in this spot, waiting for unsuspecting little kids. Then when the red light flashed he would jump out right in front of it, so the red glow would illuminate his badly burnt face. That was the first time, by now though I was an old pro, and being down here with Shauna squeezing my hand tight and both of us breathing heavily, and giggling with anticipation left me completely at ease.

Soon enough we heard footsteps echoing through the tunnel. One of them was headed right in our direction, surely they would inspect room #5. Shauna and I looked at one another, gave out one last giggle and held our breaths just as Brian ripped open the door. Now the key was not to make a sound, not a movement, not a breath, not even a blink. "I know you're in here!" he said. "I can hear you breathing."

Pffffft!!!! Oldest trick in the hide and seek book. Neither one of us was breathing, so we knew it was a bluff. Brian stepped in the room a little further and looked around. The red light flashed on, and just around the pipe I saw the whites of his eyes reflecting the red strobe. He took one more long look, turned and left the room. Yeah right!!! Second oldest trick in the book. Before the door even had enough time to shut, Brian was ripping it back open and yelling a triumphant "Haaa!!" Neither one of us flinched, or let out a breath. Brian let out a dejected sigh, turned on his heels and took off down the tunnel. Slowly, Shauna and I untangled our hands, and made our way out from behind the massive pipe. The red light flashed.

All we needed was to make our way back to Thompson Hall and we would be in the clear. I ran ahead of Shauna, jumping along the way and tapping the pipes on the ceiling. "Hey!! Wait up! They could be around here somewhere," she shouted. Realizing she

was absolutely right I slowed my pace, and performed a slow motion backwards walk, which made her laugh out loud. Almost on cue, we heard the echo of footsteps approaching. Immediately, we headed down one of the tributary tunnels, and crouched down and away from the flickering lights. The footsteps were heavy and slow, and stepped out of rhythm. It sounded almost as if this person had three feet. My heart started beating out of my chest, my hands grew clammy, and Shauna crouched even further down behind me and began to cling to my jacket.

It was at this point that everything started to slow down and intensify. Suddenly, I could hear Shauna's shallow breaths. I could hear the ticking of my swatch watch. I could hear a jingling noise growing closer with each three footed step. My mind raced to try to illustrate what this three footed jingling monster might look like, and it certainly wasn't pretty. I smelled something familiar, a strong, intoxicating scent that I couldn't quite place. Was it nail polish remover, or paint thinner, or was it gasoline?

"Holy shit!" I muttered aloud. This goofy-footed, bell-wearing beast was going to burn us alive in the tunnels like Freddy Kruger. I clenched my jaw on my tongue as hard as I could to make sure I wasn't asleep. (There was no way that Freddy could get you if you were awake!) The footsteps were just seconds away from us now. I exhaled deeply in preparation of holding my breath. My mind recited the prayer of protection: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen."

I could now see the shadow cast on the wall by the figure, and as I pressed myself into the side of the wall wishing to become invisible the figure stepped out into the light right in front of us. I wanted so badly to keep my eyes pressed tightly together, but the superhero in me needed to see what I was up against. All I was able to focus on was the

ghost white hair. That was all I needed to see. I reached behind me, grabbed Shauna's hand and with one fluid motion sent her off behind him. "Run Shauna, run!" she bolted down the tunnel, and I stood there frozen staring at this evil creature. His eyes were a piercing blue, his skin was dark and leathery, the ghost white hair was almost glowing. I saw in one hand he held a long wooden pole. "The third leg," I thought. He was ripe with the scent of gasoline and sweat. Every muscle in my body tightened as I readied myself to fight for my life. I stepped out and in front him. His face lit up when he realized who I was and he revealed his badly broken teeth in a sinister smile. "Get ready, be ready!" I thought.

"You are not supposed to be down here!" his deep voice echoed through the tunnel.

He put his hand to his belt and unlatched his keys and said "You could get hurt down here!"

It was coming, it was coming. I had to act quickly!

"Come along with me now, and we'll go call your mother."

My mother? MY mother! I couldn't put her through this. There was no fucking way that Herbie the rapist was taking me out of here and calling my mother! He reached his hand out to grab my arm, and I jumped forward and to the side of him. I kicked him in his right leg with all my might and took off down the tunnel.

"Get back here, right now or I'm getting the campus cops!!" I heard him yell out to me.

I turned around for a split second and glared into his evil eyes.

"EAT ME!!!" I yelled, and ran as fast and hard as I could.

Cassandra Cohen

Untitled

You don't know me. You can't see me. You never know what I am thinking. But I know you. I know your secrets, your inner most thoughts. I talk to you sometimes. You don't always listen. I told you not to hurt her, to put the knife down. You didn't listen. I told you to stop after the first cut, I yelled it after the second. You didn't listen. I told you to get help, to save her. You didn't listen. I told you not to hide her, that she would be found. You didn't listen. I told you to confess so that they might let you live. You didn't listen. I told you not to fight, to behave, so you could be around the others. You didn't listen. I spoke to you while you sat alone in that cell. You didn't listen. I told you to repent in your heart, that you might live forever. You didn't listen. I asked you again as they strapped you down, to repent in your heart. You didn't listen. Now your eyes have gone blank and no longer see. It is too late to listen.

Sarah Maichel

No More Than Metaphors

In the rain there lies a glimmer of hope,
A chance to wash away old and renew.
A rainbow is nature's kaleidoscope,
The presence of inner beauty shines through.
A freezing wind blows yet is not a foe,
Sweeping away that which may be askew.
Snowfall is a blanket that will bestow,
The peace that comes when ailments are
consumed.
A clap of thunder drowning out sorrow,
Drying out tears and revealing new views.
If only everything in life would flow,
Go out with the bad and in with the new.

Sadly, these are no more than metaphors,
Self preservation is the owner's chore.

Joseph Benevidez
My Narrow Fellow

Lying on the moor with its crumpled body

It reared its head to attack

Legs and arms moving in sync

No danger in shielding you

Snap! Snap! Snap!

Are happy sounds

For all it hit was extra space

Andrew Getchell

Fatality

Verbally assaulting - vaulting over coffins causing conflict speed of speech that contradicts the path, sick of crap and persistence and trying, and being denied in everything I'm striving struggling between surviving - means of dying, - I'm flying some days - and drowning beneath waves, praying to God for a place that wouldn't be bad, - not filled with the enraged - deranged - or Aids, robbery revealing the pain that's been building, Gangsters - killers - sex offenders - villains, my heart gets colder as I watch the news and get older, sick of seeing victims or people die like soldiers, hearing stories of kids barely escaping the clutches of harmful individuals, killings for rituals - M. S. 13- chain gang punishment, stripping rights away of humans - based on fear and the usual, can you try a criminal who hasn't committed a crime yet, history covered in blood and war - Is humanity to be defined as a walking corpse, good or evil or however you perceive it - is it worth believing constantly fleeing at the sight of demons cause you need Jesus, what are the reasons for my inconsequential existence - on a microscopic speck in the universe's deep ocean.

Trenton Solomon
Untitled

Love is more than a feeling
It doesn't come around every day
Snatch her out of the air
If you don't your heart will go reeling
And you'll be left looking every other way
Love is more than a feeling
It's part of your natural healing
She wouldn't have it any other way
Snatch her out of the air
It's almost like stealing
But, if you don't she might just decay
Love is more than a feeling
Other paths might be easier and more appealing
Though they shall lead you astray
Snatch her out of the air
She will make you start keeling in love with
her. For she isn't here to play
Love is more than a feeling
Snatch her out of the airway

Cassandra Cohen

The Last Thoughts of Cynthia Jane

I don't bruise. I don't know if I ever did, but if I did, I don't anymore. Sometimes I think it would be better if I did. Then I remember that if I bruised people would ask. So I am glad I don't.

There are times I wonder what would happen if people knew about the yells and screams, and the pain that always follows. Usually it is an arm or leg, sometimes a shoulder. This time it is the back. The pills I took have not worked yet. I hope they do soon.

It's my own fault they always say. I asked for it. I did something wrong, again. I always do things wrong. I move to slow. Or too fast. I went left, he said I should have gone right. Now it hurts to move.

It would be easier if she had time. But she doesn't. they need food handed to them, their clothes presented. They must be waited on, for every little thing. I can care for myself, they cannot. I have grown up enough to do that. They are still too young. Not young by age, but by act. So she has no time for me. She must care for them.

I am lonely, for there is no one to talk to. There never is. My room is often cold, just as I always am. That is why I wear long sleeves. I suppose it is a good thing, because no one can see the scars through the cloth. The cuts are harder to hide. There were some that bled a lot, and took a long time to stop. They leave the worst scars.

Sometimes I want to leave here. But I never do. I fear what they will do to me in the future. However I fear what I don't know, that is out there, more. That is why I stay here. My home is not pleasant, nor often kind. But it is my home and that thought alone offers some comfort. I guess I have too much hope. Because I always believe they will stop hurting me and that maybe one day, she will have time.

My side is really starting to hurt. Kind of like there is a lot of pressure on it. But they didn't hurt my side today. They did hurt it yesterday though. It has turned a funny color. Purple and brown sort of. Like a bruise, but I never bruise. Everything is starting to look fuzzy. Maybe I hit my head when he shoved me. I am tired all of a sudden to. They won't want food for another thirty minutes. Maybe I will take a short na…….

Andrew Getchell
Rain

I remember as a kid contemplating – the makeup of rain, before science or God was explained - I pictured the droplets of moisture being the tears of every soul as a reminder to us here, - not to forget that their near, a gathering of pain in the years like the rape victim afraid of sleeping – children being beaten - by parents frustrated with no reasoning, - the soldiers fighting for freedom, either freezing or the Desert Sun overheating them, perform miracles like Jesus and be murdered for healing, listening to civilians concealing - what their revealing - cause dealing - with their feelings is boxed, - their thoughts question whether they're a villain or not - supposed to be peaceful rain – but images bleed through the rain, standing alone in the truth with abusers and gangsters – continuing to bring ruin – to the neighborhood I grew in - cause they following so called rapper role models - who claim to be soulful – but are hollow, if they knew the whole truth and sorrow - bleeding money out of the youth – so they can be on cribs tomorrow, while everyone I knew is struggling to find food to swallow.

Nothing but the rain pouring on my face, it's clear, - overwhelmed by pain – so my tears…

… Join the rain for many years.

Christopher Kyprianos

What've You Got Cooking

I'll make a stew that's good for you,
hardy tasting, refreshing too.
For in this stew special things will go,
on a soft flame they'll simmer slow.
The ingredients needed may be hard to obtain,
missing none or it's made in vain.

First thing needed is a great big pot,
quite a bit of room because there will be a lot.
Care must be taken in making this stew,
remembering that it's especially for you.

The first thing in is CONSIDERATION,
without it there is no salvation.
The next thing in is FREEDOM, a must,
not forgetting to add some TRUST.
After that I'll through in some SPIRIT,
but not too much or you might hear it.

Next I'll add some PATIENCE to this stew,
a small dose is not enough, so I'll add two.
KINDNESS being the next thing in,
also some FEAR or there might be sin.

The last thing in is a satin dove,
pure for the heart it's all my LOVE.
Stirring this stew mixes it well,
Tasting it, is the final tell.

I hope you like what I've done,
I enjoyed doing it, it was a lot of fun.
I hope in the future I don't get in your hair,
BECAUSE I'M SINCERE AND I REALLY DO CARE!

Trenton Solomon
Ode to Disc Golf

There's nothing like the sound of chains
When you hit a thirty foot putt for birdie around trees
We'll play in all weather; even when it rains
So long as there isn't a horde of bees on the tees

Watching your disc careen through the air
Is such a magnificent sight
Sometimes you'll shank your drive and yank on your hair
Losing your plastic in thick woods is a horrible plight

It's always been about the second shot
For it can turn a bad round around
Even if it's sticky hot
You go in just your shorts and play a round

True disc golfers never stop playing
Maybe I'm crazy; but I'm just saying…

Lauren Laperriere

Reinvention

The music pounds like a heartbeat
The bass pulsates through my body
The sounds of rebellion and freedom
blast through the speakers
Dancing
Raising fists
Screaming the lyrics
Knowing that people can come together
with the same appreciation
Lyrics that compel thought
Thoughts that change perspective
Open eyes
Give new life
Give acceptance
Give hope
Knowing that for tonight this is where we all belong.

Sara Maichel

The Street Performer's Dog

I'm hungry.

Why am I here?

This song *again*?

Something stinks.

Is that a squirrel?

Ugh—wrong note.

The ground is cold.

This leash is too short.

Why don't *I* get paid for this?

I wonder if I could break free.

What if someone steps on my head?

What a life I live.

Cassandra Cohen
Kodie's Point of View

They are yelling again. I listen as I lay here on the couch. Steve wants parts for his motorcycle and mommy won't give him money to buy them. David is watching Stargate again. The one where Daniels mind is being warped by prolonged exposure to goa'uld technology. I have seen this episode before. Steve comes storming out of the kitchen and into the living room. He barks "move" at me in a tone that indicates he will move me himself if he has to. And not very nicely either.

I hop off the couch and walk into the kitchen. No one is using the computer and the screen is blank. I wish it was on so I could see that picture of Amina again. Annie said Amina was my new friend. I wonder when she will get here so that we can play. Mommy is doing dishes at the sink. Mo is hiding under the table so I go over to play with him. He hisses at me and runs up the stairs. I try to follow but I can't because the gate is up.

I go over to the sink and look up at mommy. She takes off her gloves and bends down to kiss my head. She calls me a sweet girl and goes back to doing the dishes. I sigh and flop down on the floor. Maybe when Annie comes home from school she will take me to the playground. I like when we go there. I guess I'll just take a nap now. And wish that I could talk. If I could talk to them, I would tell them it is not so easy being a dog.

Jennifer Trapasso

The Mission

In the kitchen she put on her filthy green-that once was yellow-raincoat and began preparations for her mission: *the walk*. Shaking herself into the dingy coat from ten fashionable seasons ago, she quickly, so as not to be painful, jammed her right foot covered in three layers of socks into the galoshes that were unearthed from the, most certainly, unfinished basement. Hopping and jumping, cramming and jamming, stomping and kicking her layered feet into the mustard colored boots she huffed and puffed until the blue china rattled in the dining room; second door on the left. Once finished with the footing of the feet it was time to apply the gloves to the hands, but not before washing them in hot water and soap.

When finished with her hands and gloves she stood still, mumbling to herself, "The time has come to search for *The Beast*," she shuddered. "The Beast," a too young to be called old great Dane who was indeed not all too great. She grabbed the leash and stormed down the hall in search of the family's dog. On the beds, under the tables, in the toilet, "It seems," the young girl pouted, "that he is nowhere to be found." With hands on the hips she retreated to the kitchen and to grab a cookie (her last resort). She grabbed the jar next to the knives and un-hinged the jar lid, she paused, the earth has shifted and is getting louder. She wobbled and shook with the earth as she could hear The Beast getting closer to the kitchen. Just before she heard him lunge she closed her eyes and braced herself for the sloppiest kiss and wettest nose rubs ever. Suddenly, the earth stopped moving. There was silence.

"Perhaps it is safe to look," she thought. She peeked through two fingers covered in red and white striped gloves only to see the large dog sitting in front of her panting, smiling, wagging his tail

eagerly in hopes of the treat finding its way to his mouth. She opened both eyes realizing she was in control of the situation this time and tossed him the cookie. While she watched in somewhat disgust at the sight of The Beast gorging himself over the cookie, she gracefully brought the leash to his collar and clipped it on. She stood in the kitchen, flabbergasted and awkwardly staring at the dog, realizing what idiotic ease it was to get The Beast under control. "Come along now," she said calmly to him as she lead him out of the house and out for his walk. *Mission* complete.

Andrew Girard
Villain-Elle

My world is not far different from yours,
Shackled, in this dark prison called my mind,
But whose skeletons lay before closed doors?

Emptiness storms upon the weary shores,
Of my most inner thoughts of every kind.
My world is not far different from yours.

A tale told exactly as other lores
Involve myself and the people I'd bind,
But whose skeletons lay before closed doors?

I would deceive and wrap their wrists with chords
As reality began to unwind,
My world is not far different from yours.

They would plead for worthless lives on all fours,
As I removed their eyes, making them blind.
My world is not far different from yours.

Perhaps bones can be found below the boards;
However, I hid them well you will find.
My world is not far different from yours.
But whose skeletons lay before closed doors?

Christopher Kyprianos

I Need a Harley Woman

I need a Harley Woman,
for only she will do.
I know that she is out there,
I know that this is true.
I need a Harley Woman,
for play and work and love.
I know that she is out there,
I pray to above.
I need a Harley Woman,
How lean and sweet she is.
I know that she is out there,
it's time to start our bis'.
I need a Harley Woman,
for us to share a life.
I know that she is out there,
some day to be my wife.
I need a Harley Woman,
that parties now and then.
I know that she is out there,
a Harley Man you do yen.
I need a Harley Woman,
That will care for me as well.
I know that she is out there,
come lift me from this Hell.
I need a Harley Woman,
please let her know I'm here.
I know that she is out there,
I know without a fear.
So if you see my Harley Woman,
that I crave with all my mite.
Please let her know I'm out here,
please have her send a kite.

Livanny Rivera

For the Love of a Bird

There's nothing I enjoy more than eating
a freshly prepared piece of chicken.
There's nothing more exhilarating,
my heart rate will begin to quicken.

Whether it is roasted, dark and flavorsome
From a florid bistro in New York,
or fried up in a pan inside my home
I simply cannot stop my knife and fork.

But for now I'll be unable to enjoy
the savory goodness of my beloved fowl.
A wisdom tooth extraction that annoys,
the lack of decent food makes me want to howl!

Once I have completely healed
I will eat chicken with great zeal.

Andrea Ramos

An Explanation for This Woman's Lack of Sleep

I climbed in bed for the calm peace I sought
I closed my eyes and kissed goodnight the day.
I'm captured by a most engaging thought

It's corrupted my dreams unknowing plot
random reflections have crept in to stay.
As I lay in bed for the peace I sought

the barrage arrives an endless onslaught-
fleeting obsessions come to prance and play.
I'm captured in my most engaging thoughts

asking, analyzing what the day brought
reliving, misgiving the things I say.
Still, I lay in bed for the peace I sought

It's been a losing battle though hard fought,
mind ignoring what the body conveys
and captured by my most engaging thoughts.

As dusk meets dawn, tossed and turned in my spot
and my sweet sleep has gone and slipped away.
Yet, I lay in bed for the peace I sought
while tortured by my most engaging thoughts.

Joseph Benevidez
Not until Dawn

Oh lovely Earth

Though you seem a mile away

In a second I'll be in your solid embrace

That jagged rock my final revenge

For you've always loved my face

Lauren Laperriere

Uncertainty

I never thought we could go back
After all those lies,
It all felt like a heart attack.

You made a promise to me, our pact.
I gave you all those tries…
I never thought we could go back.

You wouldn't give me one simple fact.
One felt like one thousand lies,
Exploding like a heart attack.

But you know my love is on one track.
Never ending, always clear.
I never thought we could go back.

I can never stop loving you, that's my fact
Even through all that fear.
Exploding like a heart attack.

I forgave you, rebuilt our pact.
You'll never leave, always near.
I never thought we could go back,
It all felt like a heart attack.

Christine Nickoloff

Palm Beach

Awakened softly by the gentle lap
of the sea caressing the shore
I creep down the shadowy hallway to rap
at my Mother's darkened door.
"I'm awake", she lies
in her still sleeping voice
already beginning to rise
without protest, knowing she has no choice.
Following the scent of the salty air
we anxiously make our way.
Time of the essence, we reach the last stair
and enter into the beginning of day.
The door creeks open just in time
to catch the peeking orange glow of fresh sunshine.

Gregory Vigneaux

Snow Dance

Let's go dance naked in the snow under the moonlight
Every slow step we take will be a step of perfection
We'll sway back and forth under the stars shining bright

We'll move romantically slow from left to right
You and I can share loves deepest connection
Let's go dance naked in the snow under the moonlight

Our moves will be flawless and so out of sight
We might not move in time but we need no correction
We'll sway back and forth under the stars shining bright

Dancing naked in a slow falling curtain of white
Skin touching skin puts some rose in your complexion
Let's go dance naked in the snow under the moonlight

Our fingers interlocked I'll hold on with all my might
We'll kiss each other up and down to show affection
We'll sway back and forth under the stars shining bright

Your heart and mine together will ignite
We'll spin around and around without any direction
Let's go dance naked in the snow under moonlight
We'll sway back and forth under the stars shining bright

Julian Fox
Sometimes

Sometimes you just have to find the rhyme other times you have to find the reason, the reason in fact for your true being it seems so simple but life is not that simple in fact it's much more complicated then would have ever been expected.

As you fall down the rabbits hole you find that it all falls out, out of your pocket the stream of conscience that is like the money that is going over to Haiti but none of it going to Chile all sent in that one direction like an infection that turns to gangrene ripping skin apart the finer parts of society with such calamity comes great desire to want to change but no true change will come about.

Find the map is what I say it will help you to get yourself out of the trap, if you don't though you will forever be wandering a wasteland of wasted talent where self doubt is especially prevalent as obvious as the elephant that is standing in the room next to you hexing you.

Hopefully one day you find that voice of yours instead of running with the crowd drinking Coors with the scores of future college dropouts that don't give a damn about themselves or the others that around them they simply run in circles like chickens with their heads cut off with no clue to what eludes them in the nearing end like going around the bend to that it's all over with one quick pen stroke but that how you croak with unexpected ease is simply there to please the other who thrive upon self doubt.

Sarah Linstrom
Cab Calloway

i know you
from old betty boop cartoons

scat static scratched
in black and white
like infant memory arms outstretched like

some tribal dancer floating on the infinite note
tiny steps to beat feet
and rubber knees

bending with the
sounds
of saxophone smiles

from nights behind sweating walls
summers in
old sad bastard apartment buildings

where you can hear that "scht scht scht"

but no one bothers to flip the record anymore.

Clayton Morse

V

The Gossamer Wings of angels are a delicacy here
Where dead saints pass judgment
Sweet child - sweet chariot of splendor

A stew of nations bubbles over
Beckoned by the outstretched arms
Of heaven in the flesh

Prostrate supplicant, breathe deep
Fill your empty caverns
With the blessed air of righteousness

To enter the kingdom
A trial worth of the sphinx
Yet the wisest men fail

Look upon him - the Fisher King
Who tops the list
He must fear the storm

More than the others
Fie, Fie, Fie on your presumption…
…and the teacher wept

Robert Gosselin

My Echo

I once heard my echo,
When I bravely sang out
and my words came
back to me
in waves of sound.
I once followed my echo,
By climbing through
shadowy caves
and dark
dripping canyons.
I once chased my echo,
running so fast
that I tripped over
rocks and
gnarled tangled roots.
I once found my echo,
and when I finally stood
where it was,
no one was there,
and I was left
standing alone
in a place of silence.

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There's a certain slant of light,
On winter afternoons,
That oppresses, like the weight
Of cathedral tunes.

Emily Dickinson

mount wachusett community college
444 green street
gardner massachusetts

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